

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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### **2014 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON FISHERY INFORMATION**

#### **General Information**

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2014 season in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Management Area (Area E). Preseason forecasts are the basis for the information provided. Area E forecasts can be found on ADF&G's web site:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.salmon#/forecasts>

PWSAC hatchery forecasts can be found on the PWSAC web site:

<http://pwsac.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/2014-PWSAC-Forecast.pdf>

Inseason modifications to harvest projections, season opening dates, and strategies for weekly fishing periods will likely occur as the fisheries develop. Hatchery Annual Management Plans (AMP) are used to provide guidelines to the department when managing fisheries to achieve cost recovery and broodstock objectives. Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) and Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation's (PWSAC) AMPs underwent Regional Planning Team (RPT) review on April 7, and were then submitted for the Commissioner's signature.

The forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1. The department continues to forecast wild fish runs, but the department no longer forecasts any hatchery runs except Gulkana Hatchery sockeye salmon. All other hatchery run projections are provided by either PWSAC or VFDA. Run projections for species and districts without formal forecasts are based on average historical production. These projections will provide the basis for early season management in all districts. Harvest projections for enhanced runs may change depending upon the success of hatchery cost recovery sales.

Management of PWS commercial salmon fisheries occurs from the Cordova area office. As was done last year, fishery announcements from the Cordova ADF&G office will routinely occur at 2:00 p.m. and will normally provide a minimum of 15 hours advanced notice. Emergency order

announcement information is also transmitted by FAX to all registered processors, local radio stations, and news media in Cordova and Valdez. Announcement recordings will be available for gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 907-267-2843. Daily announcements are compiled and may be found on the ADF&G web site at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

The first announcement concerning the Copper River District will be released between May 1 and May 8.

On March 7, 2014, the PWSAC Board of Directors approved the annual corporate budget for Fiscal Year 2015. The overall pink salmon and Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) chum salmon revenue goals are \$6,134,399 and \$1,498,195, respectively.

The projected PWSAC pink salmon harvest goal (cost recovery and broodstock) is 14.5% of the total forecasted 21.2 million pink salmon run to PWSAC hatcheries. PWSAC plans to harvest 31.2% of the 1.6 million chum salmon run to WNH to meet their cost recovery and broodstock goals. PWSAC does not plan to use any of the 1.04 million sockeye salmon run to Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) for cost recovery, but does have a broodstock harvest goal of 8,940 fish.

The VFDA 2014 AMP identifies a pink salmon revenue goal of \$3,927,554. A minimum of 346,000 additional pink salmon will be needed for broodstock. The projected VFDA pink salmon harvest goal (cost recovery and broodstock) is 21% of the total forecasted 12.9 million pink salmon run to the Solomon Gulch Hatchery (SGH).

### **Gillnet Fishery**

#### **Copper River District**

Copper River District is expected to open for the 2014 season during the week of May 11. The 2014 CCPF harvest projections for the Copper River District are 1.60 million sockeye, 280,000 coho, and 22,000 Chinook salmon. The Chinook salmon harvest projection is the maximum harvest that could be achieved and still meet the minimum escapement goal of 24,000 given the total run projection. The 2014 inriver goal past the Miles Lake sonar is 748,000 to 1.14 million salmon. The upper Copper River sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 360,000 to 760,000 natural sockeye salmon, and the Copper River delta SEG is 55,000 to 130,000. The department's goal is to maintain the long-term average of 450,000 sockeye salmon in the upper Copper River spawning escapement, and 84,500 sockeye salmon in the Copper River delta spawning escapement. The components of the inriver goal are as follows:

Spawning escapement	360,000 to 750,000 sockeye
Other salmon	17,500 salmon
Subsistence	82,500 salmon
Personal Use harvest	132,500 salmon
Sport fishery	15,000 salmon
Gulkana broodstock	20,000 sockeye
Gulkana Hatchery surplus	120,400 sockeye
Total	748,000 to 1.14 million salmon

The initial management strategy will be based on anticipated weekly sockeye and Chinook salmon harvests for the Copper River District and additional assessments of river conditions,

fishing effort, harvest location, and consistency of harvest. When river conditions allow the deployment of the Miles Lake sonar, the attainment of the desired inriver escapement range for the upper Copper River becomes the main factor in deciding management strategy. By late June, aerial estimates of sockeye salmon escapement trends on the Copper River Delta are also considered when scheduling fishing periods.

Two evenly spaced commercial fishing periods per week will be the preferred management approach. Whenever possible, the first period each week will begin Monday at 7:00 a.m. Depending upon fishing effort, harvest, and escapement trends on the Copper River Delta and at Miles Lake sonar station, a decision regarding a possible second fishing period for the week will be made by Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. The second period in any given week will likely begin at 7:00 a.m. on Thursday. Scheduled fishing periods will continue if environmental conditions favor upriver salmon migration and Miles Lake sonar is meeting anticipated daily and cumulative counts. While a schedule of two periods per week is the recommended management approach, this schedule could be adjusted to provide for escapement needs. The department will consider using shorter periods, additional inside closures, period closures, or other measures to achieve the required Chinook and sockeye salmon escapements. Should salmon runs be larger than anticipated, fishing periods may be lengthened or additional fishing periods may be opened to allow for additional harvest opportunity.

Current regulations allow only one fishing period during statistical weeks 20 and 21 in the ‘inside closure area’. The ‘inside closure area’ is defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(B) and extends from the Steamboat Anchorage to the west side of Big Softuk Channel at Coffee Creek. The maximum drift gillnet mesh size in Copper River District is 6 inches until July 15 when larger mesh gear will be allowed. As a reminder, **all salmon that are harvested but not sold by commercial permit holders in Alaska waters must be reported on a fish ticket at the time of landing** (5AAC 39.130(c)(10)). Fish tickets have a “not sold/personal use” field to report these salmon.

Beginning in early to mid-August when coho salmon in the harvest become predominant by number, the Copper and Bering River districts will be managed for coho salmon. The management strategy for coho salmon may be one or two 24-hour periods per week depending on escapement and harvest levels. Given satisfactory coho salmon escapement trends and harvest data, the department will consider lengthening the 24-hour period(s) or adding a second period. Weekly anticipated harvest and escapement data will be compared to the actual harvest and escapement data to determine the frequency and duration of commercial openings.

Individuals planning to participate in subsistence fishing activities in Copper River District are required to obtain a subsistence permit through the Cordova ADF&G office. **Permits will be available during normal business hours Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.** ADF&G staff will not be available to issue permits before hours, after hours, on state holidays, or on weekends.

### Bering River District

Bering River District is expected to open for the 2014 season only after sockeye salmon escapement is above the minimum SEG. The Bering River District did not meet the minimum SEG of 20,000 sockeye salmon between 2005 and 2011. During the 2011 BOF meeting, the Bering River District SEG range was adjusted from 20,000-35,000 sockeye salmon to 15,000-33,000 sockeye salmon. Beginning in early August, the Bering River District will be managed for coho salmon and management strategies will be similar to those used for Copper River District. The

2014 CCPF harvest projections for the Bering River District are 15,300 sockeye and 45,700 coho salmon.

### Eshamy District

PWSAC's Main Bay Hatchery forecast is 1.04 million sockeye salmon. In 2014 PWSAC plans to harvest 9,000 sockeye salmon for broodstock. PWSAC has indicated that they do not anticipate taking cost recovery at Main Bay in 2014. As a result, the management strategy in 2014 will be to provide two extended periods per week in the hatchery subdistrict similar to the strategy used in the past five years. Extended periods may also occur in the Crafton Island Subdistrict provided there are no concerns regarding harvest of wild stocks bound for other districts. Eshamy District is expected to open for the 2014 season on May 29.

The 2008–2012 Commercial Operators Annual Report (COAR) exvessel value calculated the set gillnet fleet harvest at 4.3% of the annual commercial salmon harvest. Consequently in 2014, the set gillnet fleet will not be restricted to 36 hours or less per week after July 10.

Eshamy River escapement will be assessed with a video monitoring system in 2014. The wild stock sockeye salmon run to Eshamy Lake is forecast at 53,000 fish, 20,500 of which will be needed to meet the midpoint of the 13,000–28,000 biological escapement goal (BEG) range. Beginning in early to mid July, fishing time and area in Crafton Island Subdistrict will be driven by escapement of wild pink and sockeye salmon in Eshamy District, and the strength of wild pink and chum salmon runs to the Northwestern, Coghill, and Northern districts. When waters of Crafton Island Subdistrict are closed for the protection of pink and sockeye salmon escapement, there may be concurrent closures of the eastern shore of Chenega Island to purse seine gear to further minimize the interception of wild stocks.

### Coghill District

The 2014 wild stock sockeye salmon run to Coghill Lake is forecast at 168,000 fish with a SEG of 20,000–60,000 fish. Achieving a median escapement of 30,000 sockeye salmon will leave approximately 138,000 fish for the common property harvest. The early run of chum salmon to WNH is forecast by PWSAC to be 1.64 million fish. PWSAC requires 512,000 chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock at this facility, leaving 1.13 million or 69% for the CCPF. Coghill District is expected to open for the 2014 season on May 29.

The 2008–2012 COAR exvessel value calculated the drift gillnet fleet harvest at 46.3% of the annual commercial salmon harvest. In 2014, the drift gillnet fleet will be allowed exclusive access to Esther Hatchery Subdistrict until July 21.

The Granite Bay Subdistrict was incorporated into the WNH management plan during the 2011 BOF meeting. This subdistrict will be managed to achieve PWSAC corporate escapement goals when management of Esther and Perry Island subdistricts is not adequately achieving these goals.

The BOF supported the use of a reduced Esther Subdistrict boundary when the Coghill Lake sockeye salmon escapement goal may not be met. During escapement shortfalls, the department has confined fishing to within 1 nautical mile off the southern portion of Esther Island. Similar area restrictions may be implemented by emergency order for the conservation of Coghill Lake sockeye salmon and Port Wells wild stock chum and pink salmon. If escapement to Coghill Lake is less than anticipated, the department may elect to further confine the fleet to the WNH Terminal Harvest Area (THA). If

sockeye salmon escapement is within the anticipated range and sockeye salmon harvest rates in Coghill District indicate a strong run, the Port Wells area will be regularly opened north to the markers near Coghill Lagoon. If the Coghill River weir escapement counts exceed the escapement goal, fishing area may be expanded to the mouth of Coghill River. If the drift gillnet fleet does not appear to be able to harvest available surplus Coghill Lake sockeye salmon, the purse seine fleet may be allowed to fish north of 61° in the Coghill District.

WNH coho salmon are present in the Coghill District fishery from early August through late September. The 2014 run to WNH is expected to be 217,000 coho salmon. PWSAC will require 2,700 fish for broodstock with all remaining fish available to the common property fisheries. Although some WNH fish are harvested in the southern areas of PWS, most of the coho salmon run will be harvested by the drift gillnet fleet in Esther Subdistrict.

#### Unakwik District

The 2014 wild stock sockeye salmon commercial harvest in Unakwik Inlet is forecast at 6,600 fish. Drift gillnets and purse seines are legal gear during all periods in Unakwik District. The district encompasses only those waters above the reef in Unakwik Inlet. During the sockeye salmon run to Miners and Cowpen lakes, the management strategy will be to provide two periods per week. This schedule is expected to begin in early June and run concurrently with openings in Coghill District. Commercial harvest and escapement information will be evaluated inseason and adjustments to fishing schedules will be made if necessary. Unakwik District is expected to open for the 2014 season on June 12.

#### Port Chalmers Subdistrict

The most recent 5-year rolling average, 2008–2012, of the COAR exvessel values placed the drift gillnet fleet at 46.3% of the annual commercial salmon harvest. As a result, the purse seine gear group has exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict remote release chum salmon fishery in 2014. The CCPF in Port Chalmers will begin on Monday, June 2.

#### Purse Seine Fishery

The 2014 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS is 38.4 million fish, of which 31.5 million will be available for the CPF. This pink salmon total run forecast includes 4.30 million wild stock fish, 12.9 million VFDA fish, and 21.2 million PWSAC hatchery fish. Approximately 2.76 million (21.4%) of the projected 12.9 million pink salmon run to VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock leaving 10.2 million for CPF harvest. Approximately 3.07 million (14.5%) of the projected 21.2 million pink salmon run to the PWSAC hatcheries will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 18.1 million PWSAC pink salmon will be available for CPF harvest. Based on the department's wild stock pink salmon forecast of 4.30 million fish, there is a potential common property harvest of 3.14 million wild pink salmon. The department will manage for each district's escapement goal, aiming for each district's long-term median, for a combined total of 1.16 million fish.

The 2014 chum salmon forecast total run in PWS is 3.08 million fish. The majority, 2.63 million (85.6%), are from PWSAC hatchery production. PWSAC forecast a run of 495,000 fish to Port Chalmers, and 492,000 fish to Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK). **Port Chalmers (5 AAC 24.370(h)(1)) and AFK remote release chum salmon will be available for harvest in the purse seine CCPF in 2014.** Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 445,000 fish, there is a potential common property harvest of 245,000 wild chum salmon. The department will

manage for each district's escapement goal, aiming for each district's long-term average, for a combined total of 200,000 fish.

The CCPF purse seine fishery will begin on Monday, June 2 with directed fisheries targeting the enhanced chum salmon runs to the AFK hatchery and Port Chalmers remote release site. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated for both locations; a 60-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Monday to 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, and an 84-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Thursday to 8:00 p.m. Sunday. Anadromous stream closures and regulatory closed waters within the open area at AFK and Port Chalmers will be suspended during June and July to facilitate the harvest of the enhanced runs. Areas open to the CCPF at AFK will remain open until pink salmon dominate the harvest and are in concentrations sufficient to sustain sizable pink salmon cost recovery harvests. Daily 14-hour fishing periods will commence for the open area at AFK on Monday, July 14, which will provide more frequent updates on chum and pink salmon harvests. Areas open to the Port Chalmers CCPF will close in late July, after which purse seine fishing periods may be opened based on the strength of pink salmon stocks.

The general waters of the eight purse seine districts will be managed based on the strength of wild stocks. Hatchery subdistricts will be managed based on the strength of both wild and enhanced stocks. Aerial survey pink and chum salmon escapement trends compared to average historical performance will determine the duration of openings in these districts. Aerial surveys of the index streams occur on a weekly basis, weather permitting.

The department has used yellow SHTF markers in the past to close terminal wild stock areas, both for escapement and quality concerns. In the past, processors directed their fleets to fish in areas where they would maintain an acceptably high quality harvest. The coordinates for these markers are available to the public, and processors may again direct their fleets to maintain a high quality harvest using these markers. The department will employ these markers for quality concerns only if given clear direction by members of the SHTF. The department may use the yellow SHTF markers as a management tool for closing terminal wild stock areas to allow for early season broad area openings, and when escapements are lower than expected. These markers may also be employed as an intermediate step before area wide closures are used.

Openings in Eastern District will be based upon the strength of wild and enhanced runs. Valdez Arm, Valdez Narrows, and Port Valdez may be managed for VFDA's cost recovery and broodstock needs. Openings in Valdez Arm and Port Valdez designed to target VFDA pink salmon will be based on the strength of the enhanced run and VFDA's progress towards achieving their pink salmon revenue goal. CCPFs targeting VFDA fish generally start during the first week of July with daily 14 hour periods (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.). In the remainder of Eastern District, openings will be based upon the strength of wild stock escapements. The management strategy will be to open area within the district concurrent with openings targeting the VFDA pink salmon run when possible. Port Valdez will be closed to the CCPF north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point beginning on August 15. Valdez Narrows Subdistrict will open on September 2 to target surplus SGH coho salmon. The VFDA enhanced coho salmon forecast is 106,000 fish with an anticipated CCPF harvest of 57,000 fish.

The AFK, CCH, and WNH pink salmon runs will be managed collectively to achieve PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock goals through openings and closures of nearby subdistricts or hatchery management areas. Prior to run entry sustaining consistent hatchery cost recovery harvest, the department may open the WNH, CCH, and AFK Hatchery THAs and SHAs to a

common property harvest to keep pink salmon quality high. Once cost recovery is initiated, PWSAC's expectation is that they will likely complete at least 70–80% of their pink salmon cost recovery harvest goal prior to recommending an opening of the CCPF in the hatchery subdistricts. PWSAC will work closely with local ADF&G management biologists to achieve the seine fisheries revenue goal as rapidly as possible to allow for an orderly and consistent common property fishery. To minimize congestion in hatchery terminal areas and subdistricts, effort will be made to provide concurrent openings at CCH, WNH, and AFK hatcheries. However, PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock harvest requirements may not always provide the opportunity for a common property harvest at all three hatcheries. Late pink salmon run management is closely linked with PWSAC's sales harvesting strategies.

The department will evaluate the late pink salmon run daily with hatchery sales harvests, broodstock collections, commercial fishery harvests, hatchery sex ratios, stock composition estimates, and wild stock escapement data. To further assess run strength and timing of late enhanced pink salmon, a Southwestern District test fishery, using the R/V *Solstice*, will be conducted in late July. Otoliths collected from daily test sets made at key migration corridors will provide stock composition estimates. Stock composition and sex ratios will provide early run entry information and allow for more informed management decisions about time and area restrictions in Southwestern District. Additionally, harvest rates may provide a qualitative gauge of run strength, timing, and quality.

Table 1. ADF&amp;G, PWSAC and VFDA commercial common property harvest projections for the 2014 salmon fishery in the Prince William Sound and Copper/Bering River areas.

**PINK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Millions)**

<b>Natural Stocks</b>	3.14
<b>Hatchery Stocks <sup>a</sup></b>	
Solomon Gulch	10.2
Armin F. Koernig	5.99
Wally Noerenberg	8.09
Cannery Creek	4.05
Natural & Hatchery	31.5

**CHUM SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)**

<b>Natural Stocks</b>	245
<b>Hatchery Stocks</b>	
Wally Noerenberg	1,131
Armin F. Koernig	492
Port Chalmers	495
Natural & Hatchery	2,363

**COHO SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)**

PWS Natural Stocks	No Forecast
Copper River	229
Bering River	487
<b>Hatchery Stocks</b>	
Solomon Gulch	57
Wally Noerenberg	214
Natural & Hatchery	548

**SOCKEYE SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)**

Copper River	1,600
Bering River	15
Coghill Lake	138
Eshamy Lake	32
<b>PWS Hatchery Stocks</b>	
Main Bay	1,029
Natural & Hatchery	2,814

**CHINOOK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)**

<b>Natural Stocks</b>	
Copper River	22

<sup>a</sup> Potential hatchery contributions to the commercial common property harvest are based on the forecast of total hatchery runs minus preseason estimates of cost recovery and broodstock harvest that will be required by hatchery operators.